

**Illinois Early Learning Council
Space Capacity Committee**
Thursday, November 3rd, 2011
10:00 am – 12:00 pm
33 W. Monroe, Suite 2400 – Chicago
2800 Montvale Drive – Springfield

MEETING MINUTES

Members Present (Chicago): Kim Collins, Angela Farwig (staffer), Ireta Gasner, Refugio Gonzales (phone), Mary Griffith (represented by Hilary Morreale) (phone), Mark McHugh (co-chair), Carol Morris (phone), Olivia Roanhorse (staffer), Bonnie Roelle, Kelley Talbot, Samir Tanna, Dawn Thomas, Martin Torres (co-chair)

Members Absent: Anita Andrews-Hutchinson, Cindy Bardeleben, Jose Cerda, Bernard Cesarone, Shannon Christian, Rebecca Deang, Craig Duetsch, Lauri Frichtl, Mario Garcia, Nakisha Hobbs, Amber Kirchoff, Holly Knicker, Dave Lowitzki, Kellie Magnuson, Giacomo Mancuso, Carolyn Newberry Schwartz, Sessy Nyman, Tracy Ocomy, Sylvia Puente, Tony Raden, Cathy Reed, Greg Will, Cindy Zumwalt

Guests: Samantha Aigner-Treworgy, Corey Ciorciari (phone), Paula Cottone (phone), Leslie Fields (phone), Loukisha Smart-Pennix

Introductions & Overview

The meeting was called to order at 10:05 am. Mark McHugh welcomed committee members and members introduced themselves. Mark introduced the new Space Capacity Committee staffer, Angela Farwig, and thanked Olivia Roanhorse on behalf of the committee for her work in facilitating the work of the committee. Olivia explained that she will continue to support the committee for the next few months to ensure a smooth transition. The committee reviewed and approved the September 16, 2011 meeting minutes with no edits or changes.

Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant Update

Martin Torres provided an update on the committee's efforts to support the state's Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant application. As part of the grant requirement to use the state's Quality Rating System (QRS) as a core quality improvement strategy to increase the number of quality early learning programs, the committee had previously discussed how to integrate the Early Childhood Construction Grant (ECCG) Program into the QRS system for the state's application. Given the ECCG Program Request for Applications had already been released, the committee was interested in how to include program quality in the second phase of applications for ECCG funding. After discussion, the committee, with guidance from the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, agreed to make recommendations to the ECCG Program administrative rules. These rule change recommendations would be included as part of the Early Learning Challenge Grant "package" of emergency rules that would be proposed to help inform the grant. The proposed rules were shared with the committee.

However, because of the barriers to making this rule change and the extremely tight time frames for the grant, the decision was made to instead get a letter of support from the Capital Development Board (CDB) in lieu of any rule changes. This letter was shared with the committee. CDB's letter was included in the state's Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge application, which was submitted on October 19, 2011. Winners of the grant should be announced in mid or late December.

SAC Grant Update and Discussion

Mark provided the committee an update on the State Advisory Council (SAC) grant. The Facilities portion of the SAC grant is for public awareness and technical assistance to encourage and assist early childhood providers in applying for funding through the ECCG program, as many organizations are inexperienced in this area. The committee reviewed the letter from the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development to the Early Learning Council regarding the overall SAC budget reduction. The budget for the Facilities portion of the SAC grant was reduced from \$430,500 to \$356,000. Olivia further explained that because the timing of the grant has been delayed, the SAC grant was adjusted from a three year to a two year grant. Currently (not accounting for the budget reduction), approximately \$165,000 is allocated to provide individual organizations with technical assistance and \$100,000 is allocated to outreach and public awareness for the first year of the grant, including the development of resources and materials. Kim Collins from the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development clarified that the \$10,000 included in the Facilities Deliverables Adjustment in the SAC budget amendment letter had not been spent.

Mark invited the committee to discuss this reduction and how it should impact technical assistance and public awareness. It was suggested that it might be beneficial to keep technical assistance intact because the public awareness campaign was already underway. It was also noted that a majority of the funds are already going to technical assistance – roughly 60% of funds are allocated to technical assistance and 40% of funds are allocated to public awareness. The committee thought it would be helpful to know where applications for the first round of the ECCG program were coming from in order to make a determination on funding for technical assistance versus public awareness.

Kim Collins informed the committee that the SAC facilities grant RFP is moving slowly. It is being reviewed, and the hope is that it will not take as long as the data RFP, which was held up by ethics concerns. Kim did not see any problems with changing the proportion of funding that would be allocated to technical assistance versus public awareness at a later date. Once a vendor is selected, the funding allocations can be adjusted as part of the contract negotiations.

The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development has not yet determined when the second RFA for ECCG funding will be released. The ballpark figure for the first round of funding is \$25 million, but it depends on the applicant pool. The Governor's Office wants to assess how the first round of the ECCG program goes before making decisions on the second round of ECCG funding or continuing the program in the future.

Given this discussion, the committee decided to hold off on making any decisions on the budget allocations for the SAC Grant until after the ECCG applicant pool can be analyzed to see how much outreach and technical assistance is needed and whether certain communities were left out of the program.

Next step: Follow-up with Governor's Office on status of SAC Facilities grant RFP and assessment of the first round applications for the ECCG program.

Early Childhood Construction Grant Program Update

Angela provided the committee with an update on the IFF webinar and FAQ document for ECCG applicants. The IFF webinar took place on September 29, 2011 and was attended by at least 120 people. Angela and Olivia created an updated FAQ document that includes: (1) questions and answers from the IFF webinar and (2) questions and answers from the week-long period immediately following the webinar during which IFF answered questions via email. This updated FAQ document was posted on the CDB and OECD websites the last week of October. Committee members were also provided a copy of the FAQ document.

Discussion of CPS Meeting and Chicago ECCG Program Set-Aside Recommendations

A. Discussion of Meeting with CPS and CPS Update

Mark informed the committee that the co-chairs had a meeting on October 18, 2011 with several Chicago Public Schools (CPS) employees regarding CPS' administration of the Chicago set-aside of the ECCG program. A summary document of the meeting was shared with the committee. CPS will receive 20% of the \$45 million allotted for the ECCG program in the capital bill, which is \$9 million. During the meeting, CPS explained their challenges in implementing the grant due to lack of administrative funding within the ECCG program. As a result of these challenges and based on the Space Capacity Committee's ongoing work on this effort, CPS was seeking guidance from the committee.

Paula Cottone, the Deputy Chief Officer for the Office of Early Childhood Education at CPS, informed the committee that there had been communications between CPS and CDB since the October 18th meeting and that CPS is waiting on a response from CDB to see what assistance CDB will give to CPS on its application for ECCG funds. Paula noted that the following is currently being discussed, either internally with CPS and/or with CDB:

- The CPS Budget Office is working with CDB to determine whether CDB has the capacity to administer the RFA process for Chicago community-based organizations. In this scenario, CPS would handle only the payment process. CPS had ideas on target areas for ECCG funding that correspond somewhat to the areas identified in the IECAM priority rankings of Chicago Community Areas.
- CPS has established with CDB that it can apply for ECCG funding in phases, so long as funds are spent by the two year deadline. CPS can amend its application if costs come in differently than anticipated.
- Any legal entity that runs an early childhood program in the city will be able to apply for the Chicago set-aside program, as well as directly to CDB during the statewide RFA process. Applications for the statewide RFA are due to CDB November 30th.

Over the summer the Chicago Mayor's Early Childhood Task Force (ECTF) convened several work groups to further develop its initial recommendations. One of the workgroups recommended that ECCG funding for Chicago programs be split 50/50 between school-based early childhood programs and community-based organizations and that Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) handle the RFA process for community-based programs. The recommendation to have DFSS oversee the administration of the RFA was in an effort to address CPS administrative capacity to run the RFA process. Currently, CPS is unsure whether it can legally allow DFSS to administer the RFA process and is seeking additional guidance from the CDB.

CPS has not made any final decisions based on the Mayor's ECTF recommendations, but is currently holding internal discussions about this process and is looking for input from the committee. Additionally, CPS has noted that while there is no legal requirement that CPS must allocate funding to programs outside of CPS, the general feeling is that CPS will split ECCG funding with community-based organizations.

CPS should have a firmer plan in place regarding the RFA process and the allocation of funding between CPS and community-based programs sometime in the next week or so. CPS did not yet have information on how the application process would be communicated to the public because it is waiting to hear back from CDB before disseminating information publicly.

B. Discussion and Recommendations of Space Capacity Committee Regarding the ECCG Chicago Set-Aside

Committee members discussed that at least 50% of the ECCG Chicago set-aside funds should be allocated to community-based programs with some members suggesting that the committee consider recommending that more than 50% of ECCG funds be allocated to community-based programs. Members noted that since the majority of CPS early childhood programs focus on preschool centers, it is important to give community-based programs, who serve more infants and toddlers, access to the ECCG Program.

DFSS has been advocating for a 50/50 split of Chicago ECCG funds and would like to work with CPS to administer the funding for community-based programs. Given DFSS' strong connection to community-based early childhood providers, they have the ability to build on their existing network and conduct outreach to all of the Chicago communities. The committee noted that a 50/50 split seems reasonable and there seems to be consensus around this figure. The committee indicated that this issue needs to be settled for CPS' application to CDB due on November 30th.

Corey Ciorciari from the Mayor's office provided an update based on a recent conversation with Ginger Ostro from the CPS Budget Office.

- CDB indicated they would administer the construction part of the grant to community-based organizations.
- CPS will administer the RFA for both CPS programs and community-based programs and decide which programs will receive ECCG funding. CDB will then take over administering the actual construction that takes place through the program. This includes the reporting requirements under the grant.
- CDB is adamant that ECCG funds must flow through CPS and not through an intermediary, like DFSS. CPS is not comfortable with the liability issues if DFSS administers the program as the funding must go through CPS.

The committee noted that given DFSS expertise and experience, they would add value to the community-based RFA process, so it seems sensible to continue conversations with CDB and DFSS about how they can partner on this. Corey responded that DFSS and CPS can still work together, but there are legal obstacles to handing over the decision-making to DFSS. Martin noted that if CPS does in fact proceed with a 50/50 split, CPS should identify all projects to be funded at the outset. There is concern that if CPS identifies its own projects first, community-based organizations will not in fact receive 50% of ECCG funding because construction costs often exceed estimates. As a result, CPS should ensure up front that 50% of ECCG funding will in fact go to community-based organizations.

The committee also noted that a key piece of the ECCG program is the use of the IECAM prioritization of community areas.

The committee then held a vote on the following recommendations to be submitted to CPS.

- 1. CPS allocate 50% of its capital grant funding to school-based programs and 50% to community-based programs in order to ensure a mix of full-day and half-day programs and an adequate increase in space for infant and toddler services.**

All in favor; none opposed. The motion was carried.

2. **At a minimum, CPS partner with the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) in decision-making with respect to the selection of community-based organizations given DFSS' expertise and strong connection to community-based early childhood providers.**
All in favor; none opposed. The motion was carried.
3. **CPS implement the same methodology for determining community need that CDB has chosen to use for its selection criteria: the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map (IECAM) priority ranking of community need. The Space Capacity Committee recommended the methodology employed in the IECAM ranking, which was created using existing early childhood data resources from IECAM, Chapin Hall, and available census data. IECAM's priority ranking of Chicago Community Areas is available at <http://iecam.crc.uiuc.edu/eccg/CCA/combined.pdf>.**
All in favor; none opposed. The motion was carried.
4. **CPS align the RFA that it issues to community-based organizations to the RFA issued by CDB in order to minimize the burden on Chicago community-based organizations that are also applying directly to CDB for funding.**
All in favor; none opposed. The motion was carried.
5. **CPS make information regarding its plan for administering the ECCG program publicly available immediately following the submission of its application for ECCG funding to CDB.**
All in favor; none opposed. The motion was carried.
6. **CPS explore other public and private funding sources to support the ECCG program.**
All in favor; none opposed. The motion was carried.

Next steps: (1) Angela (staffer) will email members with draft language for the six recommendations that were approved during the meeting.
(2) The committee co-chairs will send the recommendations to CPS.

Adjournment

Committee members asked when CDB was expected to make a decision on the ECCG applications that are due November 30. The planned timing for decisions is 30-60 days after November 30, but it is anticipated that it will take longer than this because of the expected high number of applications.

Dates for the next scheduled Space Capacity Committee meetings were announced:

- January 27, 2012, 1-3 p.m.
- April 27, 2012, 1-3 p.m.

Next step: Angela (staffer) will email members with the dates and times for the scheduled committee meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.